



LIBBY #1

UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY

REGION 8

999 18TH STREET - SUITE 500

DENVER, CO 80202-2466

<http://www.epa.gov/region08>

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MEMORANDUM

February 29, 2000

TO: Libby Asbestos Site File

FROM: Joyce Ackerman, OSC

RE: Site visits to former vermiculite exfoliating facilities

The 1953 Bureau of Mines report lists four vermiculite processing facilities in Region 8, and this is corroborated by lists in the U.S.G.S. Mineral Yearbooks. None of these four facilities is active; the buildings have either been sold to other companies, or demolished. According to the 1953 Bureau of Mines report, the Region 8 processing facilities were:

1. Western Mineral Products, Co.
Denver, CO
2. Robinson Insulation Co.
Minot, ND
3. Intermountain Insulation Co.
Salt Lake City, UT
4. Robinson Insulation Co.
Great Falls, MT

I conducted screening visits at the Denver, Minot, and Salt Lake City facilities. John Constan with the State of Montana Department of Environmental Quality conducted a screening visit to the Great Falls facility. This memo summarizes my observations during my site visits, and John Constan's report is attached.

The February 18, 2000, memo from Stephen Luftig to the EPA Regions contains a list of vermiculite processing facilities in each Region. The list for Region 8 showed a Brouk Company and Enoree Minerals Corporation located in Denver, Colorado. I spoke with Dan Thornton at EPA Headquarters and he said that this was a typographical error, and these facilities should not have been listed for Region 8.



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**1. Western Mineral Processing
111 S. Navajo Street
Denver, CO**

On February 1, 2000, OSC Johanna Miller and I drove to this address in Denver, which is near the intersection of Alameda and Pecos Street. The buildings at this address are now owned by a corn syrup company named MCP, which stands for Minnesota Corn Processors. The land is owned by another company (possibly the Steep & Deep Corporation, according to a real estate web site). We met with Stan Adelman, Area Manager of MCP. He stated that the buildings had been purchased from W. R. Grace in 1990 by his employer, Liquid Sugars Inc. (LSI), which was subsequently purchased in 1996 by MCP. The buildings at the corn syrup company are the same buildings used by the vermiculite facility, which consist of a large processing building, and a smaller office building. A rail line spur is located adjacent to the processing building, and there are three large silos. Mr. Adelman said the only change his company has made was to add tank storage. He said that when his company moved into the processing building in 1990 after it was vacated by W. R. Grace, the building was spotless. He said there were no piles of debris or dust anywhere. He said the silos were also spotless when his company bought them. He said that prior to moving in, his company removed some asbestos insulation that had been installed in the office building.

Mr. Adelman said that prior to the vermiculite operation, the property had been used for a glass plant. He said that when the corn syrup company was digging a foundation for their facility, they found a lot of glass. He said there is a landfill underneath the property. He said they have never found expanded vermiculite or ore. He thought the vermiculite operation might have been moved to Oklahoma when the corn syrup company bought the buildings.

Mr. Adelman said that W.R. Grace had a fire in the main processing building, perhaps in 1971, and then rebuilt the building. He showed us two circular holes in the ceiling of the processing building, now welded over, which may have been stacks for a vermiculite furnace. There is no furnace in the building now.

Johanna and I toured the building and grounds with Mr. Adelman. We did not see any excessive dust or piles of material that resembled vermiculite ore or insulation. Most of the outdoor property is paved and appeared clean. The immediate area surrounding the facility is primarily industrial, although there are residential homes and commercial businesses within a few blocks of the facility. On the north side of the corn syrup company across the street is a fenced property with an apparently abandoned building. Mr. Adelman said this was the former General Chemical company. He said he had seen drilling equipment and personnel on that property recently.

**2. Robinson Insulation Co.
826 4th Avenue NE
Minot, ND**

On February 2, 2000, Curt Erickson, who is the Hazardous Waste Program Coordinator with the North Dakota Department of Health, and I went to this address in Minot. Curt had learned that this building was currently owned by the City Parks Department. Three representatives from the City Parks Department met us at the property, Mr. L.D. Brunner, Mr. Darrell Zubke, and Mr. Bryan Johnson. The property consisted of a two buildings which abut one another, which are now used by the Parks Department for storing equipment and supplies. There is a rail spur adjacent to the facility. The name "Robinson Insulation" could still be seen in faded paint on the facility.

The City Parks representatives stated that the City had purchased the property in 1993. They stated that the property had been owned by the Jessen Insulation company before the City purchased it. They did not remember much about the Robinson Insulation company. They said that the insulation produced locally had been used in lots of houses in Minot. They said there had been a flood in the area in 1969. They provided names of individuals who might remember more about the vermiculite operation. Curt and I toured the building and ground with the City Parks representatives. There were no obvious piles of vermiculite insulation or ore. The building was dusty, but this was not unusual since the doors do not seal tightly and the building contains outdoor items such as playground equipment and landscaping supplies. There was no indication of any former furnaces, stacks, hoppers, or silos. The immediate neighborhood includes other industrial and commercial facilities, although there are residential homes within a few blocks of the facility.

Curt and I met with Irv Johnson in the City Tax Assessor's Office. Mr. Johnson said the building had been built in 1947, and that the Robinson Insulation company probably shut down in the 1970s. He remembered some piles being located in the vicinity of the plant during the 1970s but not huge quantities. He said the building sustained some fire damage at one time.

Curt and I went to the Minot Welding Inc. business, located a few blocks from the former Robinson Insulation building. We met with Mr. William (Bill) Nathan and Mr. Craig Nathan (father and son). Bill Nathan, the father, has operated his business at that location for approximately 40 years, and the son, Craig, has been at that location for approximately 20 years. Bill Nathan said he had worked on machinery as a contractor at the Robinson Insulation company. He said the Robinson company made vermiculate ore into insulation. Craig Nathan said his father-in-law had worked at Robinson, and Craig also said he knew somebody who had a lung disease who had received a settlement.

**3. Vermiculite Intermountain Inc.
733 West 800 South Street
Salt Lake City, UT**

Also locations at 333 West 100 South, and 669 South 200 East, Salt Lake City

On February 4, 2000, Utah Department of Environmental Quality, Division of

Environmental Response and Remediation representative Jim Thiros and I investigated the location of the former Vermiculite Intermountain facility. We researched old City directories at the State Historical Society and found references to the company. We learned that the address in the 1953 Bureau of Mines report had typographical errors, and the actual address is the one listed above at 333 West 100 South. A 1984 newspaper article at the Historical Society mentioned that the business was later moved to 733 West 800 South. Jim and I went to this latter address and found that the building is now used by an auto body shop. The owner of the building is Mr. Scott Simons, who also owns the x-ray medical services building next door. Mr. Simons leases the former vermiculite building to the auto body shop.

Mr. Simons stated he had purchased the property in 1991 from the Irvine family. Newspaper articles from the State Historical Society show that the president of the vermiculite facility was a Mr. Leland (Lee) K. Irvine. Mr. Simons said Mr. Irvine had recently died.

The facility consists of a single building. Mr. Simons said the office section of the building burned down last year after someone threw a molotov cocktail through the window. Mr. Simons subsequently rebuilt the office. Mr. Simons said that a railroad spur had formerly been located on the west side of the building, but it has since been removed.

Jim and I toured the building and property with Mr. Simons, and we spoke with some of the auto body employees. We did not see any piles of expanded vermiculite or ore. The auto body employees said they wash out the building every week. They said they have not noticed any dust other than what they generate in their business. We did not see any furnaces, hoppers or silos at the building. The building had a paint booth with a stack passing through the ceiling, but we did not obtain any information to know whether there was also a stack for the vermiculite facility. The surrounding neighborhood was primarily industrial and commercial facilities, and Interstate 15 has an overpass approximately two blocks from the auto body shop. The former Portland Cement company, now shut down, is within 1/2 mile of the property. It is possible that vermiculite products may have been used as a concrete aggregate, but I have no information to confirm this possibility.

Jim and I also went to the vermiculite company's previous address at 333 West 100 South street. This location is now an asphalt parking lot near the Salt Lake City Delta Center. An official with the Salt Lake City Health Department also found that the company had a name of Intermountain Insulation Bid Service and an address at 669 South 200 East.

The 1984 newspaper article stated that the company had a license to manufacture from the W. R. Grace Construction Products Division, that the company had been started locally in 1940, and manufactured and distributed insulation under the trade name Zonolite, Monokote structural steel fireproofing, Terralite vermiculite soil conditioners, masonry fill and concrete and plaster aggregate.